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SUBJECT: MARCH 9 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, IRANIAN AND DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUES, SINO-JAPANESE FM COMMENTS AND EAST CHINA SEA DISPUTE, UN REFORM, PUTIN VISIT

Summary

¶1. Key points made at the March 9 MFA press briefing are as follows:

- The State Department's 2005 Human Rights Report turned a blind eye to the basic facts and made irresponsible remarks regarding the status of human rights in China.
- China hopes Iran will fully cooperate with the IAEA and that the parties will intensify efforts to reach a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue.
- Beijing hopes all the participants will continue to demonstrate flexibility and sincerity and work toward an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks.
- FM Li's March 7 statement on the Yasukuni Shrine represented China's official position and the views of the Chinese people; Beijing condemns FM Aso's recent remarks on Taiwan.
- An attempt by the Japanese Government to use the East China Sea issue to divert attention away from the Yasukuni Shrine dispute will not benefit the settlement of the East China Sea matter.
- China welcomes UN Secretary General Annan's March 7 report on UN reform.
- Chen Shui-bian's decision to "force the NUC to cease functioning and the NUG to cease to apply" was a dangerous move opposed by people across the Taiwan Strait and the international community.
- Russian President Putin will visit China March 21-¶22.
- State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan will visit Sri Lanka and Nepal March 14-18.
- Minister of Agriculture Du Qinglin will attend the Chilean presidential inauguration ceremony on March ¶11. End Summary.

2005 Human Rights Report

¶2. During the regular March 9 MFA press briefing, MFA Spokesperson Qin Gang claimed that the State Department's 2005 Human Rights Report turned a blind eye to the basic facts and made irresponsible remarks regarding human rights in China. China expresses strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to the report. Qin asserted that the PRC Constitution explicitly stipulates the requirement to safeguard human rights. All levels of government have adhered to the principle of "putting the people first" and enhancing democracy and law, he maintained, adding that China has made much progress, which has been recognized by the international community. Responding to a question on the report's discussion of Hong Kong, Qin argued that the Chinese Government has followed the principles of "one country, two systems," the governance of Hong Kong by the Hong Kong people and strict adherence to the Basic Law. Beijing has supported the gradual development of Hong Kong democracy in accordance with Hong Kong's actual situation. China strongly opposes irresponsible remarks by any foreign government, Qin stressed, calling on the U.S. Government to immediately cease its interference in China's internal affairs.

Iranian Nuclear Issue

¶3. Asked by the AP correspondent about UN discussion of Iran's nuclear program, Qin remarked that there is still potential to resolve the issue through negotiation and called on the parties to step up their diplomatic efforts. China hopes Iran will fully

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cooperate with the IAEA and take confidence-building measures to create conditions for a peaceful resolution. All parties should exercise calm, continue negotiations and refrain from taking actions that could aggravate the situation, Qin stated. Asked about PRC backing for UN sanctions on Iran, he called for an intensification of diplomatic efforts and noted U.S. and EU statements in support of a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. China is prepared to work with the other parties toward that goal.

Six-Party Talks and DPRK Missile Launching

¶4. Asked to comment on the DPRK's recent launching of missiles and whether it will affect the Six-Party Talks, Qin simply noted reports of the incident but offered no further comment. In the joint statement issued following the last round of Talks, he recalled, all the parties made solemn commitments to continue negotiations aimed at a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Given that the Six Parties' positions remain unchanged, China hopes they will continue to demonstrate flexibility and sincerity and work toward an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks, Qin remarked. Beijing has remained in contact with the participating countries and has been making efforts to promote the Talks process. He confirmed that the new ROK delegate to the Six Party Talks, Deputy Foreign Minister Chun Young Woo, arrived in Beijing March 9 and will meet with Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei on March 10.

Chinese and Japanese FMs Exchange Strong Statements

¶5. Asked by the Kyodo correspondent about the Japanese Government's response to Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing's March 7 strong criticism of Prime Minister Koizumi for visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, Qin

maintained that FM Li was expressing China's official position and not his personal opinion. This is also the view of the Chinese people, Qin remarked. Japan should study FM Li's comments in a comprehensive manner and fully honor its commitment to demonstrate remorse over history. Questioned by the Fuji TV correspondent about Japanese FM Aso's remarks on Taiwan reportedly made earlier in the day, Qin expressed Beijing's shock and strong condemnation over the remarks. They contradict the Sino-Japanese joint declaration and interfere in China's domestic affairs. Qin called on Tokyo to honor its commitments on Taiwan.

Sino-Japanese East China Sea Dispute

16. Questioned about China's reported proposal to Japan on jointly exploring waters around the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands but not the Chunxiao gas field, Qin acknowledged the bilateral dispute over the Diaoyu Islands and asserted that joint energy exploration in that area serves both countries' interests. During the third round of Sino-Japanese consultations on the East China Sea, Japan made a proposal based on the precondition of a median line, which China will never accept, he stressed. Qin argued that China's exploration of the Chunxiao gas field is being conducted in an area not disputed by Japan. Beijing's proposal is reasonable, constructive and conducive to shelving differences and engaging in joint exploration activities, and China hopes Japan will study it carefully. Qin asserted that an attempt by the Japanese Government to use the East China Sea issue to divert attention away from the Yasukuni Shrine dispute will not benefit the settlement of the East China Sea matter or help improve bilateral ties.

UN Reform

17. China welcomes UN Secretary General Annan's March

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7 report on UN reform, Qin stated. China wishes to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the UN Secretariat and end corruption within the body.

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Support for One-China

18. Asked about international support for China on the Taiwan issue, Qin asserted that Chen Shui-bian's decision to "force the National Unification Council to cease functioning and the National Unification Guidelines to cease to apply" was a dangerous move opposed by people across the Taiwan Strait and the international community. The international community should remain alert of his Taiwan independence moves, Qin stressed.

President Putin's Visit

19. Qin announced that Russian President Putin will visit China March 21-22. He will meet with President Hu Jintao, NPC Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo and Premier Wen Jiabao and attend the opening ceremony of the Year of Russia in China and the Russia-China Economic Forum on Industry and Commerce. The two countries will sign a series of agreements. In response to a Reuters reporter's inquiry, Qin stated that energy is an important component of bilateral cooperation that serves the interests of both

countries.

Upcoming Trips

¶10. Qin noted that State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan will visit Sri Lanka and Nepal March 14-18. Minister of Agriculture Du Qinglin will attend the Chilean presidential inauguration ceremony on March 11. Qin commented that China and Chile are expanding cooperation in various fields. He noted that during the APEC Summit President Hu agreed to the establishment of a Free Trade Zone with Chile, adding that the development of China-Chile relations will also strengthen cooperation with the Latin America region.

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